Muslim Legal Fund of America: Terrorist Defender?

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On Friday, April 13 in Seattle, Washington, the Muslim Legal Fund of America (MLFA) sponsored a benefit dinner featuring popular Islamist cleric Yasir Qadhi. Qadhi is a seemingly strange choice to headline an event celebrating justice and the defense of innocents; he has a long history of support for extremism.

In 2001, as a Master's student at the Islamic University of Madinah, Qadhi delivered a viciously anti-Semitic talk, stating: "As for 80 to 90 percent of the Jews in our times, they are Ashkenazis, i.e. Khazars, i.e. Russians. ... Look at them — white, crooked nose, blonde hairs... These are not a Semitic people." Later, Qadhi called his rant against Jews a youthful indiscretion, and professed his appreciation for Jews. Yet, his extremism continues to this day.

In September 2016, Qadhi lamented the execution of death-squad leader Mir Quasem Ali, who was convicted for his role in the murder and torture of individuals during Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence from Pakistan. In October 2016, Qadhi defended the Taliban, writing: "The Taliban might have had strange beliefs... but it was their country that was falsely invaded, and they did what every single nation would do. Fight back."

In March 2017, Qadhi wrote about convicted Al Qaeda fundraiser Babar Ahmad, who ran the al-Qaeda and Taliban recruitment site Azzam Publications, that he was "honored to know [him] as a friend." Prior to this, Qadhi called the spiritual leader of the Virginia Jihad Network, Ali al-Tamimi, who was given a life sentence for influencing a group of violent pro-Pakistani radicals to go overseas to attack US troops, a mentor.

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terrorism. MLFA touts itself as a civil-rights group, but it behooves us to question this label. Does MLFA support civil rights for wrongly-accused innocents, or something more sinister?

MLFA funds legal work and programs to defend Muslims against what it calls "injustice in American courtrooms, prisons and communities." MLFA claims its clients are innocent and only accused because of systemic anti-Muslim bias in the American legal system. Look up many of the MLFA clients, though, and one finds a who's who of defendants convicted by the United States government of terrorist activity and/or material support of terrorism.

MLFA
MUSLIM LEGAL FUND OF AMERICA

In fact, one of MLFA's most high profile clients was the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF), a non-profit group which had been indicted, along with its leadership, in July 2004, of funneling millions of dollars to Hamas. It was the largest terrorism case in the history of the United States, and it encompassed two separate trials, one in 2007 and one in 2008. In the end, HLF and five of its leaders were found guilty of all of the charges against them.

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An Islamist terrorist group, PIJ is largely funded by Iran and is responsible for multiple terrorist bombings in Israel, which have claimed the lives of dozens of Israeli civilians. Al-Arian's domestic PIJ network included a charity, a think tank, a children's school and a mosque, al-Qassam, named after the main PIJ mosque in Gaza. In February 2003, the US charged al-Arian and his colleagues with using the entities to raise money for PIJ and its suicide attacks, and in April 2006, al-Arian plead guilty to conspiracy to provide services to PIJ.

Another of MLFA's cases was that of Aafia Siddiqui, a female al-Qaeda operative, who had been sentenced in September 2010 to 86 years in prison, for the attempted murder of American soldiers and FBI agents in Afghanistan. MLFA also funded the defense of Miami imam Hafiz Muhammed Sher Ali Khan, who was convicted of funneling tens of thousands of dollars to the Pakistani Taliban for the express purpose of murdering American troops. And MLFA funded the defense of Mohammed Salah, a suspected Hamas financier and "specially designated terrorist," who was sentenced to 21 months in prison for lying about his association to Hamas.

The list goes on and on. And, given MLFA's client base, it's no wonder that the organization hosted Qadhi at one of its events; his Islamism is just as virulent as the MLFA's.

MLFA's Islamist behavior is not limited to defending terrorists and hosting Yasir Qadhi. In fact, the group makes a habit of hosting hate preachers and terror-connected activists. On Saturday, March 17, the Executive Director of MLFA, Khalil Meek, spoke at an MLFA event in Ontario, California. Meek, a convert to Islam who previously went by the name "Eric," is the former Vice President of the Dallas/Ft. Worth chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) or CAIR-DFW. CAIR was established in June 1994 by operatives from Hamas, including then-global head of Hamas, Mousa Abu Marzook. The group was named an unindicted co-conspirator in both trials of the HLF financing case. CAIR-DFW was originally founded as CAIR-Texas by convicted HLF leader, Ghassan Elashi. Naturally, when the US Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal regarding HLF, Meek described it as "a dark day for America."

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non-consensual sex. He has also recently sought to diminish the alleged criminal sex acts of Islamist academic Tariq Ramadan, who is currently being sued by a number of women for assault and rape. In February, Brown posted, "[M]y concern here is about the integrity and fairness of the judicial process and civil liberties, so IT DOESN'T MATTER IF HE DID IT OR NOT." The same day, Brown also posted about the HLF case, describing the HLF proceedings as "absolute travesties of justice" and "kangaroo trials."

On Saturday, April 14, MLFA sponsored a Raleigh, North Carolina event featuring the founder and director of the Qalam Institute, Abdul Nasir Jangda. In January 2015, Jangda taught a seminar on misinterpretation of Islamic texts, discussing his views on a number of controversial subjects. He stated that a thief who steals something valued at least $500 is eligible to have his hand chopped off. He stated that apostates to Islam (those who abandon the religion) "deserve the death penalty." He provided a callous and graphic description of how to stone adulterers; he stated, "You aim for the head repeatedly and take the person out." He said that the majority opinion of Islamic scholars on gays who act on their sexual inclinations is that they deserve the same fate.

And on May 4, Jangda's colleague at Qalam, Hussein Kamani, will be the featured speaker at yet another MLFA event. Kamani, like Jangda, teaches a very strict fundamentalist version of Islam, where any "resemblance" of Jews is abhorrent, where adulterers must be "stoned to death," where a Muslim male is allowed to fulfil his sexual desires "through a slave girl that he owns," and where it is alright to beat one's wife, as long as it is a "last measure."

So, it seems that the choice of having Qadhi speak in front of MLFA is a perfect one, given the very apparent support for those associated with terrorism by both Qadhi and MLFA. The two try to defend truly dangerous people, and mislead the public by conflating legitimate investigations with anti-Muslim bias.

The title of Qadhi's event was "Realizing the Promise of Hope" — the same name given to the event featuring Meek and Brown. And Jangda's event was called "Upholding Justice, Be the Change." But what hope or justice can there really be for ordinary, moderate Muslims whose leaders demonstrate that

and condemned by all.

Joe Kaufman is a writer for Islamist Watch, a project of the Middle East Forum.

Joe Kaufman

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